United Nations A/C.2/63/SR.13

General Assembly
Sixty-third session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 December 2008

Original: English

Second Committee

Summary record of the 13th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 20 October 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Metelitsa (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Belarus)

Contents

Agenda item 38: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

08-56019 (E)

In the absence of Ms. Ogwu (Nigeria), Mr. Metelitsa (Belarus), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 38: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (A/63/74-E/2008/13 and A/63/123)

1. **Mr. Nour** (Officer-in-Charge, Regional Commissions New York Office) introduced a note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report on the item prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) (A/63/74-E/2008/13). He also conveyed to the Committee the apologies of Mr. AlDafa, Executive Secretary of ESCWA, who had planned to introduce the report but had been prevented from attending the present meeting by other urgent matters.

2. The report was submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/26 of 26 July 2007, and General Assembly resolution 62/181 of 19 December 2007, and covered developments up to the end of February 2008. It revealed that the occupation of the Palestinian Territory by Israel continued to deepen the economic and social hardship for Palestinians. The Israeli mobility restrictions and closure policies remained primary causes of poverty and humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territories, restricting Palestinian access to health and education services, employment, markets and social and religious networks.

3. Palestinians had been displaced as a result of the destruction of property, the confiscation of land and the revocation of residency permits. Almost 25 per cent of Palestinians living in occupied East Jerusalem were separated by the barrier from the city and from essential services to which they were entitled as residents. Continued settlement expansion was further fragmenting the West Bank into a series of isolated enclaves.

4. Israel's closure policies impeded normal economic activity and were a main cause of the deteriorating humanitarian situation. Palestinian export trade was particularly affected by the closure system, which raised transportation costs of basic commodities due to long detours caused by road blocks and the "back-to-back" system. The near-total isolation of Gaza since mid-June 2007 had resulted in shortages of food, medical and relief items, spare parts for critical health and water sanitation installations and raw materials for commerce and industry. Fifteen per cent of the population in Gaza had water for only one or two hours a day as wells and pumping stations fell into disrepair. In 2007, the overall daily average water consumption per capita had been 60 and 58 litres in the West Bank and Gaza respectively, far below the minimum standard recommended by the World Health Organization of 150 litres a day.

5. Social and economic indicators continued to show negative trends in the occupied Palestinian territories. Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was estimated to have declined by 5 per cent in 2007 compared with 2006, and by almost 40 per cent compared with 1999. Unemployment had been estimated at 28.8 per cent in 2007, while dependency on humanitarian aid in the Gaza Strip now stood at over 80 per cent. A growing number of Palestinians, particularly children, suffered from malnutrition and other health problems. As a result of closures and curfews, pregnant women had been delayed in trying to access health care during pregnancy and childbirth, with an estimated 2,500 women a year giving birth while attempting to reach a delivery facility. Overall enrolment in basic education had fallen from a peak of 96.8 per cent in 2000 to 91.2 per cent in the 2006-2007 school year.

6. Israel was preventing the return of the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan expelled in 1967. As of March 2007, the population of Syrian Arabs in the Golan was down to an estimated 21,000 persons living in 5 main towns, compared to about 20,000 Israeli settlers living in 45 illegal settlements. The Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan was faced with increasing restrictions regarding access to land and natural resources, and a large proportion of the traditionally pastoral population had lost significant acreage used for pasture.

7. In a message to the February 2008 United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, the Secretary-General had reiterated the Organization's position that only a permanent political settlement which ended the occupation and gave Palestinians their independence could fundamentally alter the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people. He had stressed that the key

ingredients for a breakthrough existed, pointing to bilateral negotiations and the support of donors. With the right mixture of wisdom, realism and political courage, historic progress could be made towards the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

8. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine) said that, while he recognized that ESCWA had not been the only body involved in the production of the report and did not wish to undermine its significance, some items in it did not appear to be appropriate. For example, the report made a reference to "attacks by Palestinian militants", giving the impression that the Israeli occupation was the result of the Palestinian attacks. Everybody knew that was not true. Similarly, the statement that "internal conflict in the occupied Palestinian territory had compounded existing hardships" gave the misleading impression that the internal conflict was a main reason for the difficult economic and social situation in the occupied Palestinian territories. Such indications were not in line with the aim and main purpose of the report. He also requested that future reports should include pictures and other visual information to give a more telling image of the damage to natural resources caused by the occupation.

9. **Mr. Ali** (Syrian Arab Republic) drew attention to the importance of the work done by ESCWA in the economic and social domains for the countries of the region. He regretted the absence of the Executive Secretary of ESCWA, the more so as the date and time for consideration of the present agenda item had been deliberately selected to allow interactive participation with the ESCWA secretariat. He asked whether it would be possible to have more information on the source of the data contained in the report and also whether ESCWA experts had actually visited the occupied territories to see for themselves the reality of the occupied Palestinian and Syrian peoples. Additionally, he wished to know whether preparation of the report had involved close cooperation with the United Nations agencies and programmes working in the field.

10. **Mr. Nour** (Office-in-Charge, Regional Commissions New York Office) responded that he had taken note of the comments made and would convey them to ESCWA and its Executive Secretary. He stressed that the report had been produced on the basis of extensive consultations between ESCWA and other organizations working in the field. ESCWA experts had actually visited the occupied territories and had first-hand knowledge of the situation on the ground. The report had also benefited from input from departments at United Nations Headquarters.

11. **Mr. Saleh** (Lebanon), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, observed that for more than four decades the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrians in the occupied Syrian Golan had been suffering from oppressive Israeli measures, policies and practices, which constituted a flagrant violation of international conventions and customs, particularly international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. It also constituted a deliberate disregard for hundreds of resolutions adopted by the United Nations. Arbitrary arrests of Palestinians and Syrians by Israel, the use of excessive force against them, the demolition of their homes, the strict restrictions on their movement, and the adoption of closure policies in the occupied Palestinian territories, had all impeded the Palestinians' access to health services, education, job markets and natural resources. In addition, Israel had imposed a suffocating economic siege and other restrictions on the movement of goods and persons and had tightened the restrictions on the operations of humanitarian agencies working in the occupied Palestinian territories, particularly the Gaza Strip, while the international community silently watched. That economic siege, which had led to severe shortages affecting the basic needs of everyday life, such as food, water, fuel, electricity and health care, had compounded the expansion of Israeli settlements, construction of new settlements, confiscation of lands, depletion of water resources and contamination of the environment by dumping of all kinds of wastes, including nuclear waste, in the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories. All those activities were destroying economic and social life in the occupied Palestinian territories and the occupied Syrian Golan.

12. According to the ESCWA report, the Israeli occupation forces had demolished more than 2,200 residential units in the West Bank and Gaza during the past decade, leaving more than 13,000 Palestinians homeless. Again according to the report, the occupation forces had illegally confiscated more than 38 per cent of the Palestinian lands in the West Bank from their Palestinian owners, categorizing some portions as closed military areas, while using others to

expand existing settlements. In 2007, the number of Israeli settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, according to the ESCWA report, had risen to 45, which had been built on the ruins of Syrian villages and agricultural lands in blatant violation of Syrian rights. Israel's actions were in defiance of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and General Assembly resolution 27/61, which had both considered that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction, and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan was null and void.

13. Israel was still erecting its separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in clear contravention of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15, in which the Assembly had acknowledged the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 9 July 2004. The wall, which would eventually enclose more than 80 per cent of the settlers in 73 illegal settlements, would lead to the creation of a new reality contradicting both the letter and the spirit of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which called for Israel's unconditional withdrawal from the Arab occupied territories.

14. The separation wall would annex 10.2 per cent of the land of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, to Israel. It would separate more than 50,000 Palestinians living in 15 residential communities from the rest of the West Bank, forcing those people to obtain residency permits to live in their own homes. The separation wall was also designed to enclose Palestinian natural resources, including water resources and wells, thus denying the Palestinian people their sovereignty over those resources. Furthermore, it encircled the highly fertile Palestinian farmlands; the Palestinian farmers who owned land on the other side of the wall were facing extreme economic difficulties, since over 80 per cent had trouble obtaining Israeli permits to allow them to cultivate their own lands. The first phase of the wall construction had led to the destruction of more than 12 million square metres of fertile agricultural Palestinian land. The construction of illegal settlements in the West Bank and Gaza, in addition to the construction of the separation wall, had led to the confiscation of 3,292 square kilometres of Palestinian lands between 1967 and the present. From 1967 to 2000, Israeli forces and illegal settlers had uprooted a million olive trees, in addition to a large number of other fruit-bearing trees. Since 2000, the Israeli occupying forces had uprooted over a million additional trees for the purpose of building or expanding settlements, and connecting them through a network of special roads.

15. Israel was exploiting 86 per cent of the water resources available in the West Bank, while Israeli settlers used a further 5 per cent, leaving the Palestinian population with a mere 9 per cent to meet their entire needs. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the Israeli occupying authorities deprived the Syrian farmers of the water they needed for agriculture, selling it to them at prices that exceeded many times what the Israeli settlers paid. Israel also imposed high tariffs on Syrian agricultural products, which made the Syrians unable to market them at a competitive price.

16. The excessive Israeli exploitation of the water resources in the Palestinian territories had led to an increase in the salinity of the existing aquifers. Furthermore, the channelling of waste water from the sewage networks of the Israeli settlements towards Palestinian valleys and villages, as well as the dumping of solid waste from the settlements into Palestinian lands, had led to the contamination of the aquifers in the West Bank and several cases of intestinal disease. The scarcity of the water available to the Palestinians, in addition to the contamination of a substantial portion of it, prevented them from moving to irrigated cropping, which had higher economic returns, and restricted them to the practice of rain-fed agriculture.

17. All of those illegal Israeli practices represented a violation of the rules of international law, especially international humanitarian law and human rights law. They had led to the creation of a suffocating economic and social situation, which had exacerbated unemployment and led to the collapse of numerous Palestinian institutions, as well as to the displacement of many families from their lands, which were their only source of livelihood. The Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories were deprived of all inalienable rights, including the right to life, the right to ownership and the right to development of and sovereignty over their natural resources.

18. Member States should urgently work together to force Israel, the occupying Power, to respect its commitments under international law, international humanitarian law, and relevant United Nations resolutions; lift the injustice afflicted upon the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrians in the occupied Syrian

Golan; compensate them for the damage inflicted on them; and recognize their legitimate right to sovereignty over their natural resources. As long as the Israeli occupation persisted, given the inability of the international community to put an end to it, the United Nations General Assembly, and especially the Second Committee, would remain responsible for highlighting the adverse economic, social, and environmental impacts of that occupation on the Palestinian and Syrian peoples.

19. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine) recalled that 2008 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the catastrophe that had forcibly exiled hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people from their homes and land. During the past 41 years of brutal oppression by the occupying Power, Palestinians had watched with increasing desperation as their national resources were illegally confiscated and exploited. Those actions had directly contributed to drought and desertification in Palestine and currently threatened the viability of the Palestinian people's legitimate aspirations for self-determination.

20. Water resources were becoming increasingly scarce owing to the illegal construction of the separation wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which would de facto annex approximately 46 per cent of such resources in the West Bank. The occupying Power already used 73 per cent of the available water from the West Bank aquifers, while Palestinians used only 17 per cent. In the Jordan Valley alone, 41 illegal Israeli settlements consumed 75 per cent as much water as the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank. In addition, the occupying Power had allocated only one eighth of the 850 million cubic metres of freshwater produced by water aquifers in the occupied West Bank to the Palestinian population. More than half a million Palestinians in the West Bank were therefore forced to buy increasingly expensive water for household, agricultural or industrial use. Consequently, the overall daily average of water consumption per capita in Palestinian households had dropped to alarming levels in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip.

21. The crippling siege of Gaza and the disruption of its fuel supply had also resulted in much of the sewage from Gaza being pumped into the sea untreated, causing irreversible environmental damage and posing an increasing threat to human health. The illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory were yet another source of serious environmental pollution, particularly their 200 or so toxin-producing factories. The occupying Power was compounding the problem by denying Palestinians the right to carry out water and environmental projects. Such restrictions had left Palestinians with fewer water resources than before the Israeli occupation of 1967. That situation was not only unsustainable but also clearly in grave violation of the right to food.

22. Agriculture was the only source of income for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. However, the Israeli occupying forces had been waging a war against that vital sector of the Palestinian economy since 2000, including by destroying a million and a half trees in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The occupying Power currently exploited 40 per cent of the land of the West Bank and much of the territory's valuable land and water resources had been annexed by the illegal construction of the separation wall.

23. Israel's punitive system of over 700 checkpoints and barriers was severely restricting the freedom of movement of the entire Palestinian population and having a negative impact on farmers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly olive farmers. The Israeli authorities had issued only 10 per cent of the permits that had been issued to Palestinian farmers in the previous year to enable them to access their crops behind the illegal separation wall. Such restrictions would have a devastating impact on the quality of their soil and crops in the long term. The siege of the Gaza Strip was also reported to have driven the agricultural and fishing industries there to near collapse.

24. Since the Annapolis Conference, the occupying Power had used the rhetoric of peace to buy time while it continued to confiscate more Palestinian land and to destroy the prospects for a viable Palestinian State. It was the moral and legal obligation of the United Nations to ensure that the occupying Power ceased its exploitation of Palestinian resources and compensated the Palestinian people for the losses they had suffered as a result of those illegal practices.

25. **Mr. Al-Mazrouei** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Palestinian people continued to suffer as a result of the occupation by Israel. The Israeli authorities had separated the Palestinian territories and imposed checkpoints on the roads, constraining the movement of goods and people. Palestinian children were also suffering from malnutrition and a lack of access to basic education as a result of those policies.

26. The confiscation of Palestinian natural resources, the destruction of Palestinian land and the pollution of Palestinian water resources were all expansionist policies pursued by Israel in gross violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. Israel had adopted equally oppressive and discriminatory policies against the Arab population in the occupied the Syrian Golan. His delegation therefore called on the international community to adopt all measures necessary to ensure that Israel ended its aggressive policies, withdrew from the occupied territories and compensated the Palestinian people for the damage caused. The international community should also increase its donor assistance so that the Palestinian people could rebuild their destroyed infrastructure.

27. **Mr. Daoud** (Sudan) said that the Israeli occupation continued to impose constraints on the movement of Palestinian goods and people and to disrupt the work of the humanitarian agencies. The closure regime had increased levels of extreme poverty among Palestinians by curtailing their access to health care and education. Palestinian citizens were still being subjected to arbitrary arrests and confiscation or destruction of their property. Meanwhile, the construction of the illegal separation wall and the displacement of the Palestinian people by illegal settlements continued.

28. The exploitation of Palestinian natural resources, including 91 per cent of the West Bank's water resources, and the confiscation of Palestinian arable land by the occupying Power were in clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and had led to a lack of food and energy security for the Palestinian people. Israel's confiscation of Syrian land and natural resources had also had a negative impact on the Arab population living in the occupied Syrian Golan.

29. His delegation called on the international community to honour its commitments to end the hardships suffered by Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan. It also called on Israel to withdraw from the occupied territories and to provide compensation for the damage caused.

30. **Mr. Al-Habshee** (Malaysia) expressed deep concern over some of the most disturbing information contained in the report: 83 inhabited residential structures had been demolished between February and December 2007, resulting in the displacement of more than 611 Palestinians; the overall daily average of water consumption per capita in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Gaza Strip was far below the minimum standard recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO); individual acts of wanton cruelty continued unabated; and mobility restrictions and closure policies continued to impede the normal economic activities of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan.

31. The export of olive oil played a particularly important role in the Palestinian economy. However, the people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory had not been able to benefit from the increase in prices owing to the restrictions imposed on them by the occupying Power. As a result of those restrictions, the occupied territories had suffered from a shortage of food and fuel long before the start of the current global crises. More aid would be needed to avert a humanitarian crisis, especially given the anticipated fall in official development assistance (ODA) as donors struggled to cope with the effects of the financial crisis.

32. Israel also continued to restrict the movement of humanitarian workers, thereby denying basic assistance to those most in need. The present behaviour of the occupying Power was not surprising, however, given its history of brutal oppression of those living under its occupation, its lack of respect for the norms, customs and laws governing civilized States and its flagrant violation of international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol, Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and Security Council resolution 338 (1973).

33. His delegation urged Israel to respect in full all the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council as well as international human rights and humanitarian law. Israel must also respect the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which had called on Israel to cease construction of the separation wall and to provide reparations for any damage caused to Palestinians. However, the tireless efforts of the international community would be insufficient without a strong and sincere commitment on the part of all the parties involved to find a lasting solution to the conflict.

34. **Mr. Shawabkah** (Jordan) said that the illegal Israeli settlements and separation wall in the occupied

Palestinian territories had had devastating consequences for the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people. The settlements were a major source of environmental pollution, while the separation wall had led to the destruction of the olive oil industry and had deprived the Palestinian people of access to their own agricultural lands.

35. Such Israeli practices constituted a danger to the peace process. His delegation therefore called on Israel to cease all settlement activities and construction of the separation wall in the occupied Palestinian territories.

36. **Mrs. Wahab** (Indonesia) said that, while the recent High-level Event on the Millennium Development Goals had emphasized the need to provide greater access to resources for regions unable to reach their targets, the MDGs were far beyond the reach of the Palestinian people living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan, who were denied access to resources and were experiencing a severe economic depression. Unceasing turmoil in the West Bank and Gaza, together with closures, curfews and economic restrictions, had jeopardized development, with the Palestinians unable even to count on the provision of basic social services.

37. An urgent solution was needed for the problem of Israeli settlement activities, which were in breach of international law and created severe economic hardships for the Palestinian people. All social and humanitarian indicators pointed to a decline in living conditions, to which the international community must respond; her delegation therefore welcomed the focus of the 2008 United Nations consolidated appeal for the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Only a permanent political settlement that ended the occupation and gave Palestinians their independence would, however, achieve a long-term improvement of conditions.

38. The existence of a viable Palestinian State would also depend on the preparedness of its people to assume all the responsibilities that made for effective self-determination. Since efforts by the international community to help equip the Palestinians for those responsibilities required funding, her delegation appreciated the outcomes of the Paris donors' conference and the Palestine Investment Conference, while also acknowledging the importance of the Berlin conference in support of Palestinian civil security and the rule of law. For its own part, it proposed to work through the New Asian-African Strategic Partnership (NAASP) to enhance the technical capacity of the Palestinian people and had co-sponsored the July 2008 NAASP Ministerial Conference on Capacity-Building for Palestine, which had mobilized Governments and international organizations to train Palestinians in fields needed for the administration of an independent Palestinian State. In that context, her country would train 1,000 people over five years, with a focus on the institutions required for peacemaking and peacebuilding. It was optimistic that a successful two-State solution would eventually be achieved.

39. **Mr. Al-Fayez** (Saudi Arabia) said that conditions in the Middle East were highly volatile and dangerous. The continued Israeli occupation of Arab lands had resulted in violence and unrest owing to the constant suffering and despair caused to the Palestinians by measures including arbitrary detention, the disproportionate use of force, house demolitions, and severe restrictions on the mobility of both people and goods. The Occupied Palestinian Territory, and the Gaza Strip in particular, was subject to a suffocating economic embargo and the continued construction of Israeli settlements.

40. The only way to bring the situation to an end was through Arab-Israeli peace, which would also have repercussions for international peace and security. Otherwise, the sufferings of the Palestinian people would only increase, while their opportunities for development would decrease as they continued to deplete their energy and resources in trying to resolve the conflict.

41. History showed that continued commitment to a just and permanent peace would lead to a resolution of the situation in the region. Both parties to the current peace talks should therefore seek a comprehensive solution. All previous efforts had been based on partial or unilateral measures that did not solve the problem. Exaggerated emphasis on procedural questions, disregard for the basic issues and the absence of clearly defined steps with a balanced and binding timetable had rendered the Quartet's rapprochement efforts ineffectual, especially in the absence of neutral observers to monitor compliance and penalties for non-compliance. Israel had infringed previous agreements and a new vision was urgently needed. The Arab peace initiative represented a historic opportunity to establish peace on the basis of international legitimacy. His country was committed to seeing an

end to the conflict, with the establishment of agreements based on the withdrawal of Israel from the territories occupied in 1967. Since the Arab countries had reached consensus on the question of refugees and had reaffirmed their commitment to peace, it was now incumbent on the international actors to change their way of dealing with the conflict. Israel must end its inhumane treatment of the Palestinians and cease colonization activities and the building of the separation wall, which was aimed at the unilateral establishment of new facts on the ground.

42. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that, despite all the United Nations reports and resolutions on the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan, the suffering of Palestinians and Syrians in those occupied territories was increasing. According to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 (A/63/326), the occupation possessed characteristics of colonialism and apartheid. The ESCWA report also provided facts and figures detailing the practices of the Israeli occupation and its violations of the Geneva Conventions, as well as clearly showing that Israeli military commanders were committing crimes against humanity, for which they should be held accountable and tried immediately.

43. The Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and the suffering of the Syrian people living under occupation had persisted since 1967, with Israel imposing its laws on the occupied Syrian Golan in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and continuing to adopt policies and impose practices on the Syrians living in the occupied Syrian Golan that deprived them of their livelihoods and their rights under international law. In particular, the ESCWA report highlighted the building of settlements on the ruins of Syrian villages in the occupied Golan; the continued threat posed by landmines, including mines in the form of children's toys, which had injured four Syrian children in 2006; Israel's depletion of natural resources in the occupied Syrian Golan, including by dumping nuclear waste, destroying agricultural land and depriving Syrian citizens of access to water, and its attempts to impose Israeli nationality on them.

44. When the Committee recommended that the General Assembly should adopt resolutions taking into account the social, environmental and political situation of populations under foreign occupation, it conveyed a clear message to the world's people and to future generations that the occupation of other peoples' lands by force was a violation of both human nature and all international laws and instruments. His delegation denounced the position of some States which, while calling for human rights to be upheld in all international forums, opposed mentioning the suffering of peoples living under foreign occupation, especially Israeli occupation, when it came to negotiating draft resolutions on humanitarian and social questions. The Assembly's inability to impose its resolutions due to the imbalance of political power did not render those resolutions any less important. His delegation hoped that the Committee would adopt by consensus the draft resolution before it, thereby unequivocally indicating that it was opposed to all forms of foreign occupation.

45. **Mr. Al-Aud** (Yemen) said that the Israeli occupation authorities were persisting in their aggression against the Palestinian people, through targeted killings, a continued embargo and closure policy and the building of military checkpoints, as well as by destroying houses and confiscating land. His delegation wished in particular to highlight Israel's practices against agriculture in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Palestinian agricultural sector was suffering huge losses as a result of the destruction and confiscation of arable land and the uprooting of fruit trees, leading to an escalation of poverty and directly harming 60,000 Palestinian farmers. As a result, the number of Palestinian families living below the poverty line had increased and the efforts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory to achieve the MDGs were being hindered. Similarly, farmers in the occupied Syrian Golan were facing restrictions on their access to water and very high taxes on their crops, which had a negative impact on their ability to market agricultural commodities and consequently damaged their livelihoods.

46. Israel's policy of systematic aggression against the Palestinians was a clear violation of humanitarian and international law. By targeting the agricultural sector it aimed to destroy the backbone of the Palestinian economy, which would in turn further increase the suffering of the Palestinian people.

47. His delegation reiterated the inalienable rights and total sovereignty of the Palestinian and Syrian peoples in occupied territories over their natural resources and called on the international community to

oblige Israel to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions and rules of international law, to lift the blockade on the Gaza Strip and to stop confiscating and destroying land, uprooting trees and depleting resources in the occupied Arab territories.

48. **Mr. Ben-Tura** (Israel) expressed disappointment that the Committee was once again considering an item that reflected a selective, one-sided and distorted political agenda. Rather than advancing peace or truly attempting to address the issue of shared natural resources, the current discussion served solely as a political instrument to perpetuate an unbalanced and inaccurate information campaign about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Not once during the debate had any reference been made to the attacks regularly launched on Israeli citizens by Hamas rockets, with the aim of killing and injuring as many innocent people as possible, nor had there been any condemnation of the incitement against Israel's very legitimacy that took place in Hamas-run schools. Those phenomena had intensified since Israel's disengagement from Gaza and the subsequent Hamas takeover. There had also been frequent attacks by Hamas terrorists on border crossings between Israel and the Gaza Strip, which were vital entry points for humanitarian assistance and other supplies. Israel's security measures were thus a necessary response to the security threats that it faced.

49. The ESCWA report ignored the fact that the Palestinian Authority already exercised jurisdiction over many resources, while interim cooperation and arrangements were in place with regard to other resources. Cooperation was critical since natural resources cut across borders and affected all people in the region.

50. Rather than singling out one country for discriminatory treatment, the Committee should focus on urgent issues of concern to all countries. The economic and social situation of all parties to the conflict would improve once Israelis and Palestinians had negotiated a fair, just and lasting final status agreement. The involvement of the Committee did nothing to promote the cause of peace in the Middle East region, which would instead require genuine, bilateral dialogue among those committed to coexistence.

51. **Ms. Loza** (Nicaragua) said that it was pointless to talk about sustainable development and economic growth when people lacked control over their own lands, water and other natural resources, and particularly when an occupying force denied them access to basic rights such as health and education. The strangulation of the Palestinian economy was a direct result of the illegal occupation of its lands and other natural resources, the restrictions on the mobility of its people and the destruction of its infrastructure on a daily basis. The Palestinian people could not dedicate itself fully to pursuing economic and social development when its prime concern was to survive the bombardments of the Israeli army.

52. Her country, which had itself suffered foreign occupation and aggression at various points in its history, reaffirmed the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's struggle and resistance to the Israeli occupation. While it was important to aspire to the sustainable economic development of the Palestinian people, the first task must be to require Israel to implement the resolutions calling on it to recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and sovereignty, and thereby to allow them to return to the land that was historically theirs. The Committee should continue to discuss the agenda item each year until that was achieved.

53. **Mr. Ashoor** (Oman) said that Israel, in defiance of numerous United Nations resolutions, continued to exploit resources that rightfully belonged to the Palestinian people and the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. It was also continuing construction of the separation barrier in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Israeli settlement construction was altering the landscape, and Israeli monopolization of land and water resources was depriving thousands of Palestinian families of their livelihoods. The Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan was also being deprived of access to its water resources, including Lake Mas'adah, which was being diverted for the use of Israeli settlements, further handicapping an agricultural sector already overburdened by disproportionately high Israeli taxes. The solution was to revive the peace process on the basis of the principle of land for peace in accordance with international resolutions and the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative.

54. **Mr. Al-Murbati** (Bahrain) said that the Arab-Israeli conflict illustrated clearly the relationship between security and economic development. Since 1967, Israel had been exploiting resources in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian

Golan in defiance of United Nations resolutions and the Geneva Conventions. Israel's land confiscation, the complicated system of checkpoints, and the illegal separation barrier had isolated Arab populations from one another and cut them off from their livelihoods and essential services. Israeli settlement activity was depleting water and land resources in environmentally unsound ways. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to dispose of nuclear waste and was diverting the waters of Lake Mas'adah for the benefit of its expanding settlements. In the face of all those obstacles, no progress could be made without a permanent political settlement that ended the occupation and realized the vision of two States living side by side in peace.

55. **Mr. Tag-Eldin** (Egypt) said that the report had amply documented the deterioration of conditions in the Occupied Palestinian Territory resulting from Israel's excessive use of force, arbitrary arrest, expropriation, land levelling, settlement expansion, restriction of movement, and continued construction of the separation barrier in defiance of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the Arab population continued to be cut off from their resources in spite of United Nations resolutions declaring the Israeli annexation of the Golan illegal. In the face of those facts, the international community must take action, and his country had engaged in tireless efforts to preserve the momentum of the peace process. Fundamental change in the economic and humanitarian situation would not occur without the realization of Palestinian sovereignty over all the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem; complete withdrawal by Israel from occupied Arab land in Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon; and full implementation of the Arab Peace Initiative. He called on Israel to display the political will necessary for a political solution.

56. **Mr. Al-Nasrallah** (Kuwait) said that the continued inhuman practices of the Israeli occupation authority, ranging from house demolitions and mobility restrictions to killings and arbitrary arrests, had prevented the Palestinian people in the occupied territories and the Arab residents of the occupied Syrian Golan from enjoying even minimum basic living standards, in violation of the rules of international humanitarian law and human rights law, as well as the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice. Construction of the separation wall had led to internal displacement, forced many people in the West Bank to relocate, caused hundreds of Palestinians to lose their agricultural livelihoods and deprived many thousands of people of access to their work.

57. The Israeli occupation authorities also had total control of the majority of water resources in the Palestinian territories. As a result of their military activities, many reservoirs and wells had been destroyed, leading to water contamination. Traces of the polio virus had been found in the water supplies of the Gaza Strip. The Israeli occupation policies had also contributed to a major deterioration of the Palestinian economy, which meant that it would be very difficult for the Palestinians to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Finally, Israel's policy of arbitrary arrests and detentions had led to the imprisonment of some 9,400 political prisoners, including 120 women, some of whom were under 18 years of age.

58. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the ongoing construction and expansion of Israeli settlements had led to the continuation of oppressive policies against the Arab population, including the imposition of disproportionately high taxes, with the aim of forcing them to abandon their homes and lands.

59. He emphasized his country's commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative as the means of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace and securing Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, including the occupied Syrian Golan.

60. **Mr. Alahraf** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that there had been no change in the methods of the occupation. In addition to having killed almost 400 people and injured almost 2,000 during the previous year, it was doing psychological and material damage to Palestinian families and destroying residential areas and agricultural land. As part of a calculated policy of social and economic strangulation, settlement expansion had cut off Palestinian areas from each other, the separation barrier had cut off thousands of inhabitants from their sources of livelihood and basic services, and border closures had cut off Palestinians from the outside world and foreign assistance. The resulting conditions were particularly hard on refugees, women, children, and the sick. In the occupied Syrian Golan, the occupier was building settlements, levelling land, uprooting trees, and destroying the agricultural sector by monopolizing water supplies and imposing

exorbitant taxes. Israeli occupation policies were in clear violation of international law, and the deteriorating conditions would only increase the sense of marginalization, despair and deprivation among the population. He called on the international community to demand an end to the occupation, restoration to the Palestinian people of their rights, and compensation from the occupation authorities for the human and material damage they had caused.

61. **Mr. El-Enazi** (Qatar) said that the continued decline of social and economic conditions among Palestinians made finding a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict all the more urgent. The Israeli army continued to act in flagrant violation of international law and United Nations resolutions, with almost 400 dead and close to 2,000 injured during the previous year. Over 8,000 Palestinians were in Israeli prisons, including over 800 being held in administrative detention without charge or trial. The separation barrier was dismembering Palestinian territory into isolated pockets and cutting off East Jerusalem. The occupation and its settlements were a serious obstacle to development in both the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. If Israel truly desired security and peace, it should comply with international resolutions that called for an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital and full withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan.

62. **Mr. Hijazi** (Observer for Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, rather than expressing disappointment about so-called selectivity in consideration of the agenda item, the representative of Israel would do well to examine the facts, which had been amply documented by the report and had been confirmed by many other agencies, including Israeli human rights organizations. Rather than attacking the Committee for considering the item, the Israeli Government should take steps to reverse the abhorrent reality that those facts reflected, and end the occupation in order to pave the way for a better tomorrow for both peoples.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.